

The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, January 28. 1695.

Quest. 1. **I**N the 3d of Dan. and the 25 v. after Nebuchadnezzar had caus'd the three children to be cast into the Fiery Furnace, he says. "Loe I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the Fire, and they have no hurt, and the Form of the 4th is like the Son of God. Pray whom did Nebuchadnezzar mean by the Son of God, and if our blessed Saviour, how came this Heathen to have more knowledge of him than the Jews themselves had before his coming?"

Ans. That the ancient Learned Heathens, long enough before Christianity came into the world generally asserted and believed one Supreme Deity, and even a Trinity in the Divinity, is demonstrable and undeniable, and has been render'd so by the very learned Dr. Cudworth, which we'd fain see either the Atheists or Antitrinitarians attempt to answer. This was a part of their Cabala, the height of their Tradition Learning, deliver'd from Father to Son, and doubtless receiv'd from the Patriarchs and first planters of the world; and that among others the ancient Jews had clear and undeniable Notions of these matters would be easy to prove, contrary to the opinion of the Querist, were their room for't at present which perhaps we may do in some other place. As for Nebuchadnezzar, being so great a Prince, 'tis no doubt but he was vers'd in the Religion and Learning of his Country, as the Persian Kings were afterwards, it may be more than any others: Now we can prove that the Chaldeans, or ancient Magi did own a Trinity, consequently a Son of God. First from Pythagoras, who clearly acknowledges it, and is known to have liv'd amongst 'em, and to have had a great part of his Learning from them. Secondly, from the Chaldaic Oracles the *ἱερεὺς λόγιος* mention'd and commented upon by Hierocles, Damascius, Porphyry and other Heathens, therefore not forg'd by Christians and these affirm, that the whole world was made by three, and that a Trinity, whose head was an Unity, shines through all things. But supposing all this shou'd be doubted; what follows wou'd set it, we think, beyond Contradiction: For they call'd the three in this their Trinity, Oromasdes, Mithras, and Arimanes, or Aciuanus, as has been observ'd by Vossius, and several others, each of which they believ'd to be God, to be omnipotent, and to have had a Hand in the Creation of all things. This is positively enough asserted by Plutarch, who tells us, "Zoroaster made a Threefold Distinction of things, that he assign'd the first and highest rank to Oromasdes, who in the Oracles is call'd the Father, the lowest to Arimanes, and the middle to Mithras who is call'd the Second mind." And upon this Plutarch himself observes how great an agreement there is between the Trinity of Plato and Zoroaster, and that they differ only in words. Nay, he goes further, and says that the Persians from this Mithras were us'd to call any Mediator by the same name. We own they often understood the Sun by Mithras, but that they had also a higher notion of him, and made him the same with Oromasdes we shall anon show, whom they asserted as far above the Sun as the Sun was above the Earth, and yet they gave the Title of Omnipotent to Mithras, and call him *πρωτος θεος* the First God, and yet more, The Maker and Father of all things, therefore of the Sun it self the Demiurgus, or Opificer, of the world, as Plato also made his second Principle, and *ὁ κρυπτος θεος*, the secret, or hidden God, in the same sence with the Egyptian Ammon, which could never agree to the Sun, who is not only visible himself, but makes all things else so. In a word, they

distinguish'd between an Intelligible and visible Sun, as is plain in Julian's Orations, calling the second in their Trinity sometimes by the name of the Sun (as the Scripture calls our Saviour the Sun of Righteousness) which they fancy'd his Symbol or Representation, as the Fire again of that, and yet might own him an infinite and spiritual being as well as the Papists do our Saviour, who represent him by a Crucifix, and worship him by it.

We foresee only one objection against what we have advanc'd, and that is, that the Arimanes of the Persians was suppos'd by them to be a bad God, the Original of Evil, and consequently, that Mithras was only a middle God, or Mediator between those two adversary Gods. Now that this was Plutarch's opinion cannot be deny'd, any more than that 'twas that of Meneas, the Father of the Manichees, if there were really ever any such man, who carries half the name of his God (as Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar, &c.) in his own. But to this we have to answer, first, that tho this shou'd overthrow their Trinity, yet still there wou'd be a Duality, a Mithras, a Second mind or Principle (according to their Theology,) a Creator of the World, a Son of God: But secondly we shall show in what sence the ancient Philosophers did hold Arimanes, or this third in their Trinity, to be Evil. They thought he presid'd over matter, the lower part of the Creation, over all that was imperfect, nay many of 'em believ'd matter it self to be Evil, as doubtless 'tis imperfect, and the cause of much Evil: And this seems to have been Plato's notion of it, as to his Psyche, or Third Principle, which he makes the mundane Soul, or immediate cause of all the motion in the World, and intimately joyn'd and united to matter, according to Pythagoras his famous opinion of a Monad and a Dyad, which 'tis true Plutarch, or whosoever was the Author of the *Placita Philosophorum* thus explains in one place, "that by the Monad is meant God, by the Dyad, a Demon, or Principle of Evil, according to Plutarch's mistaken account of Zoroaster's Divinity or rather the degenerate Practice and Doctrine of the Magi, his successors, who first came to Theurgy, and then to downright Witchcraft, which is so notorious of the Chaldeans, that their very names were us'd for Magicians, who might easily take the Devil for the Spirit that ruled and guided the World from the very beginning, when they found him in actual possession, and acknowledg'd as the God of this world. But that the more ancient notion was only as we have explain'd it, seems clear from what this same Author says of it in another place. "That the Monad was an active principle, mind, or God, the Dyad Passive, and matter: To which was united that eternal Psyche which Pythagoras also describes, as permeating and pervading all things, as his *ὁ νους* His very mind, in Plutarch, must have been the second person, which according to Plato had another above it. And indeed how cou'd he own a Tetrachys, or Quaternity, without a Trinity, which must as necessarily be included in it as Three are in Four? Which Tetrachys, after all, might be no more than the Three persons, (as the Heathens call'd 'em Principles distinct from each other, and the *το δευτερον* the whole Divinity, or Divine Nature, consider'd as a Fourth, which seems as probable a solution of that Tetrachys by which he us'd to swear, tho not so ingenious, as that of Dr. Cudworths, That the Tetragrammaton was meant by it, which Pythagoras might well learn among the Jews, as 'twas afterwards spread far and near among the Heathen Nations.

But we have still further Evidence that the 3d Principle in the *Chaldaic*, or *Zoroastrian Trinity* was not antiently accounted an *Evil Being*, from *Plutarch's own words*, concerning this *Oromasdes*, who he says, did *thrice increase*, or *triplicate* himself, *ὁ τριπλάσιος αὐτῶν* whereby he explains what he had formerly related: Now if *Oromasdes*, or the *Fountain* or *Root* of the *Divine Nature* was thus fruitfully diversified, If the first Principle thereof were good; if *Mithras*, the second, who is by *Dionysius* call'd *Triplafios*, or *Threefold*, were as has been prov'd omnipotent, and the same with *Oromasdes*, and consequently *Good*, will it not follow that when this *divinity multiply'd* it self into a third principle the same with both the former, that third must be also as good as either?

The *Sun* is, that a *Trinity in Unity* was an ancient Tradition in the *Chaldaic Learning*: That *Mithras* was the *Second* in this *Trinity*, the *Sun* his *Image*, as the *Fire* the symbol of that. Now *Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image*, as he did, its likely, take some hint of it from that *Image* which was represented to him in his *Dream*, so 'tis very probable he also represented the *Sun* by it, the usual *Idol* of the *Babylonians*, whether they call him *Bell*, *Nergal*, or any thing else, as the *Fire* in the *Furnace* we look upon to be no other than the *Symbol* of the *Sun*, one of the *Chammim*, or *perpetual Fires* dedicated to his service, in almost all Nations of the world, and remaining some of 'em in *Persia* and the ancient country to this day, into which 'twas the custom to cast those who would not worship the *Sun*, and the *Jews* say *Abraham* himself was serv'd in the same manner by the old *Chaldeans*, who would fain have burnt him for a *Heretic*, interpreting that of *God's* delivering him out of *Ur*, which signifies *Fire*, in a *Literal Sense*: And that this *Fire* was an usual thing at their publick Devotions, to the *Sun*, seems pretty plain from its being near the *Image*, in the very place of the assembly, as well as from the *Command* which the *King* gave, that it shou'd be *Heated Seven times* more than 'twas wont to be heated. It seems 'twas usual to heat it, tho not so violently, and it may be the *Image* and the *Fire* were so near each other, that they were to be worshipt both together, whence the *Jews* answer'd, we will not serve thy *Gods*, in the plural number, tho *Elohim* is we confess often us'd only for one *God*. Now when *Nebuchadnezzar* saw one of a very glorious appearance, and *Majesty* and *Beauty* far above *humane*, as doubtless had the *Fourth* who was present in the *Furnace*, it's probable enough he might think this was the *Intelligible Sun*, or their *Oromasdes* duplicating himself, appearing in the 2d Principle, who was describ'd by his Countrymen and Theologers, the *Magi*, or *Chaldeans* as *Porphyry* tells us, in the *Life* of *Pythagoras*, to be without like *Light*, as within like *Truth*, and who was believ'd by those *Chaldeans* to be the *Mediator* between matter and spirit, whence 'twas very natural for the *King* to cry out. "The form of the fourth is like the *Son* of *God*."

We shall ask leave to add here another Conjecture, that from such Tradition, as this it's possible the wise men who came to salute and present our Saviour might have some kind of notice of him, which if they were *Chaldeans* as many think will be much fairer, or otherwise how shou'd they so readily interpret this *Star* to signify his *Birth*, without a particular Revelation, which we don't find they had for their coming, tho such was given 'em to direct 'em home again. We shou'd here answer several Questions sometimes since sent us concerning the pretended verses of *Orpheus*, the Books of *Hermes Trismegistus*, The History of *Sanchoniathors*, and one or two more of the same nature, but because such subjects are but for few Readers, we shall defer them to some other *Mercury*. And shall close this after we have observ'd that all the Clamor of the *Arrians* and *Socinians* against the *Orthodox*, as having taken their *Trinity* from *Plato*,

(whereby however they own that the Heathens did acknowledge such a thing,) its evident that the *Arrian Trinity*, (for they, we think, own'd the Holy Ghost, as well as the Son to be *God*) and the *Socinian Duality*, who acknowledge the Son to be a *made God*, are much nearer the *Heathenish* and corrupt *Platonical Trinity* than the *nicene Fathers* and the *Church of England*, for we own the three divine persons *Coeternal* together and *Coequal*, whereas the *Platonists* and other Heathens believ'd 'em only three Principles, *Subordinate* to one another, which is also the opinion of those (we think) mistaken persons here mention'd.

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